

Nutrition While Nursing

Congratulations, you've finally met your little bundle of joy! Your body has done a lot of heroic feats over the last nine months, and it still needs a lot of superpower to help your body recover and produce a wealth of good milk to nourish your baby.

Rest, Recover, & Receive Support

Although you may feel pressure in our culture to “get back in the game” of daily activities soon after giving birth, taking time to rest and saying “yes!” to support will pay off in dividends in supporting milk supply and your long-term thyroid and adrenal health.

- In many other cultures around the world, new mothers' only duties are to relax, recover, and nurse their babies with the support of their families for anywhere from 4-8 weeks!
- Although the extent of this type of recovery might seem to be available to you, ask yourself these questions. You might find that you have more support than you think!
 - Who can you rely on to help you during these intense few weeks/months?
 - If you don't have family or friends to help, can you consider hiring a postpartum doula or a housekeeper?
 - Can someone arrange a meal train for you, in which friends or family sign up to deliver a meal to your house a few days per week for several weeks?
 - If you have other children, is it possible to have additional childcare for a time?

Eat Enough Nutrient-Dense Foods

You need even more nutrients while breastfeeding than you did while pregnant! Think about it, you're still growing a baby -- now he or she is just a bigger, more active one! Your body also needs extra energy to repair any wounds (think C-section or tearing) and replenish after blood loss.

- During the first 6 months postpartum, it's estimated that exclusively breastfeeding moms need an extra 500 calories per day!
- Listen to and honor your hunger and fullness cues, and you'll consume the amount that you need.
- It's too easy to undereat during this time, since you might not be used to eating so much and you're busy caring for your new baby! Again, enlist a meal train and stash nutritious snacks in the spots in your house where you breastfeed.
- For liquids, a good rule of thumb is aiming for at least 1 oz of fluids per 1 lb of body weight

Foods to Help with Recovery & Nourishing Baby

- Soups, stews, and curries made with bone broth
- High-iron foods, like pot roast, pulled pork, and organ meats (you can hide liver in chili, spaghetti with meat sauce, and meatloaf!)
- High-fat foods, like pork, butter & ghee, fatty fish, nuts & seeds
- Foods rich in omega-3 fats, like seafood, eggs, and grass-fed beef
- Probiotic-rich foods, like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, miso soup, etc.
- Iodine-rich foods, like seafood, seaweed-infused broths, or roasted seaweed snacks
- Plenty of leafy greens and other non-starchy vegetables
- Well-cooked starches, like oatmeal, brown rice, or sweet potatoes
- Lots of warm liquids, like broths and teas

Supplementation



You'll work with your registered dietitian to discern which specific supplements are best for you. Here's a general overview of options that may supplement your healthy eating pattern:

- A high-quality prenatal vitamin
- Omega-3 with DHA
- Vitamin D if your prenatal does not contain enough
- Iodine if your prenatal does not contain enough
- Probiotic
- Gelatin or collagen

Recommended resource: Real Food for Pregnancy by Lily Nichols, RDN, CDE